

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 128031

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OCLR, CVIS, NO, UR, US

SUBJECT: CREW LIST VISA PROBLEMS

REF: STATE 115351,MOSCOW 7275

1. DEPARTMENT CALLED IN DZHAVAD AND ZHUK OF SOVIET EMBASSY
ON MAY 31 TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS OF US MERCHANT SHIPS' CREWS
IN OBTAINING SHORE LEAVE. PRESENT ON US SIDE WERE EDGAR
AND TREICHEL OF EUR/SOV, NEWMMASTER OF SCA/VO, SOTO OF INS,
AND BOURDON OF MARAD. DEPARTMENT RAISED PROBLEMS OF SHORE
LEAVE FOR US MERCHANT SHIPS' CREWS AND VISAS FOR US CITIZEN
PASSENGERS OF CARGO VESSELS. DEPARTMENT ALSO INFORMED
ZHUK OF TRANSIT VISA PROCEDURES FOR SOVIET CREW REPLACE-
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MENTS.

2. DEPARTMENT PRESENTED CREW VISA ISSUE ALONG THE LINES SET
FORTH IN REFTELS, POINTING OUT THAT THE USE OF TELEGRAPHIC
VISA NOTIFICATION (IBEX) IN LIEU OF THE ACTUAL CREW LIST
VISA WAS ADOPTED BY THE USG TO FACILITATE ENTRY OF SOVIET
SHIPS' CREWS INTO US PORTS. DEPT STRESSED THAT THIS SYSTEM

WAS A SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WHICH APPLIED TO NO OTHER COUNTRY BUT THE SOVIET UNION. DEPARTMENT THEN NOTED THAT IN CONTRAST SOVIET SYSTEM FOR HANDLING CREW LIST VISAS PUT BURDEN

FOR TRANSMITTING VISAS BY MAIL TO USSR ON US SHIPOWNER. THIS HAD LED RECENTLY TO A NUMBER OF CASES WHERE US CREWS WERE NOT ALLOWED ASHORE. DEPARTMENT PROPOSED THAT SOVIET EMBASSY ADOPT A SYSTEM OF TELGRAPHIC NOTIFICATION SIMILAR TO THAT USED BY THE USG.

3. IN RESPONSE ZHUK CLAIMED THAT THE IBEX PROCEDURE MADE VERY LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN PRACTICE, BECAUSE IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS AT PORTS STILL REQUIRED PRESENTATION OF ACTUAL CREW LIST VISA BEFORE THEY WERE PERMITTED ASHORE. SOTO STATED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE, SINCE IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS IN PORT WERE INSTRUCTED TO ACCEPT EITHER THE IBEX MESSAGE OR THE ACTUAL CREW LIST VISA. HE STATED THAT A VERY CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE WOULD BE THAT AT LEAST 50 OF ALL SOVIET CREWS' ENTRIES ON SHORE WERE ON THE BASIS OF IBEX TELEGRAMS, NOT THE ACTUAL VISA, AND NEWMASTER ADDED THAT PROBABLY IN 90 OF THE CASES HANDLED BY MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD, SHORE LEAVE WAS GRANTED TO THE SOVIET CREWS ON THE BASIS OF THE IBEX TELEGRAM. IT WAS ALSO POINTED OUT TO ZHUK THAT IF THE SOVIET SIDE DID NOT BELIEVE THE IBEX SYSTEM TO BE USEFUL, THEN WE WOULD DROP IT, SINCE IT WAS A BURDEN TO OUR POSTS.

4. ZHUK ALSO COMPLAINED THAT IN A NUMBER OF CASES WHERE HE HAD ASKED FOR DEPARTMENT ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING SHORE

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LEAVE FOR A SOVIET CREW THE RESPONSE WAS ALMOST ALWAYS NEGATIVE. TREICHEL REPLIED THAT IN THOSE CASES WHERE AN IBEX TELEGRAM HAD BEEN SENT BUT WAS NOT IN THE HANDS OF INS AT THE PORT OF ENTRY DEPT MADE, THROUGH INS, ARRANGEMENTS TO HAVE THE CREW ALLOWED ASHORE. HOWEVER, IN THOSE INSTANCES WHERE NO CREW VISA HAD BEEN APPLIED FOR IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ADMIT THE SOVIET CREW. SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS WERE HANDLED WITH ZHUK AND SOME WITH THE LOCAL SHIPPING AGENT. SOTO STATED THAT IN SUCH CASES THE MASTER AND ONE OR TWO OTHERS WERE PAROLED ASHORE TO DO SHIP'S BUSINESS BUT THE CREW WERE NOT PERMITTED ASHORE. THIS APPLIED TO SHIPS OF ALL FOREIGN NATIONS, HE SAID. (FYI. THE PROBLEM OF SOVIET SHIPS FOR WHICH THERE IS NO CREW LIST VISA HAS BEEN A RECURRING ONE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. DEPARTMENT HAS EXPLAINED SEVERAL TIMES TO ZHUK AND TO AMTORG IN NEW YORK THAT IT IS UNABLE TO TAKE FAVORABLE ACTION IF THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN A VISA. ZHUK'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THIS MATTER, DESPITE REPEATED DEPARTMENT EXPLANATIONS, MAY HAVE COLORED HIS GENERAL

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE DEPARTMENT'S HANDLING OF CREW LIST VISAS. END FYI)

5. REFERRING TO THE RECENT PROBLEMS OF CREWS IN SOVIET PORTS, ZHUK STATED THAT PREVIOUSLY THE SOVIETS HAD NOT BEEN ENFORCING THEIR REQUIREMENT THAT CREWS CAN BE ADMITTED ASHORE ONLY UPON PRESENTATION OF THE CREW LIST VISA. HE POINTED OUT THAT FOR FOUR YEARS THIS LIBERAL POLICY OF THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN IN EFFECT. EDGAR THEN ASKED WHETHER THE RECENT RESTRICTION OF US CREWS CONSTITUTED A CHANGE IN POLICY BY THE SOVIETS. ZHUK SAID HE DID NOT KNOW, AND WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE REGULATIONS THAT WERE BEING ENFORCED.

6. IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION MARITIME ATTACHE DZHAVAD ASKED A NUMBER OF CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND STUDIED CLOSELY A COPY OF AN IBEX MESSAGE WHICH WAS GIVEN CONFIDENTIAL

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HIM TO EXAMINE. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHAT IMPACT THE DEPARTMENT'S REASONING HAD ON HIM, HE CLEARLY APPROACHED THE SUBJECT WITH A MORE OPEN MIND THAN ZHUK. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS STRESSED TO DZHAVAD THAT SOLUTION WE WERE LOOKING FOR WAS AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD ASSURE

SHORELEAVE FOR OUR CREWS WHEN VISAS HAD BEEN APPLIED FOR. WE THOUGHT A TELEGRAPHIC NOTIFICATION FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY TO THE SOVIET PORT AUTHORITIES CONFIRMING ISSUANCE OF CREW LIST VISA AND GIVING PARTICULARS OF A SHIP'S ARRIVAL MIGHT BE A REASONABLE SOLUTION. WE STATED THAT IF THE SOVIETS WERE UNABLE TO RESPOND IN A PRACTICAL WAY IN THIS MATTER, WE WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER TERMINATING THE IBEX PROCEDURE. DZHAVAD PROMISED TO REPORT OUR CONVERSATION TO MOSCOW AND WE STATED THAT WE WOULD SIMILARLY INFORM OUR EMBASSY AND CONSULATE GENERAL. ACTION REQUESTED. EMBASSY SHOULD FOLLOW UP WITH MFA AND MINISTRY OF MERCHANT MARINE STRESSING US DESIRE FOR PRACTICAL SOLUTION.

7. DEPARTMENT ALSO RAISED QUESTION OF VISAS FOR PASSENGERS OF US CARGO SHIPS. ZHUK SAID THAT, AS BEFORE, VISAS FOR SUCH PERSONS COULD BE ISSUED, BUT THAT THE PERSONS INVOLVED WOULD HAVE TO APPLY THROUGH AN AMERICAN TRAVEL BUREAU. HOWEVER, DEPARTMENT HAS OBTAINED FROM LYKES BROTHERS A COPY OF A COMMUNICATION FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY TO A US PASSENGER WHO APPLIED FOR A VISA. THIS COMMUNICATION, WHICH WAS SENT IN 1976, STATES THAT A VISA CAN BE ISSUED TO A PASSENGER UPON PRESENTATION OF THE FOLLOWING: A) COPY OF SUPPORTING LETTER FROM LYKES; B) COPY OF THE TICKET FOR PASSAGE ON THE SHIP; C) THREE PICTURES; D) A

CHECK OR MONEY ORDER IN THE AMOUNT OF SEVEN DOLLARS. THE LETTER ADVISED FURTHER THAT THE PASSENGER COULD OBTAIN A GUIDE IN ODESSA THROUGH THE LOCAL INTOURIST AGENCY IN THAT CITY. (COPY OF THIS COMMUNICATION BEING POUCHED TO EMBASSY).

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8. DEPARTMENT HAS DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH LYKES AND THE LATTER STATES THAT THE PROCEDURE OUTLINED IN THE SOVIET EMBASSY COMMUNICATION CITED ABOVE IS ACCEPTABLE. REQUEST EMBASSY DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH MFA. WE BELIEVE THAT THE PROCEDURE IN THE SOVIET EMBASSY COMMUNICATION WOULD BE EFFECTIVE WAY OF RESOLVING THE PASSENGER-VISA PROBLEM. REQUEST EMBASSY ASK MFA TO AUTHORIZE THE SOVIET EMBASSY TO HANDLE PASSENGER VISA APPLICATIONS IN THIS WAY.

9. DEPARTMENT ALSO CONFIRMED TO ZHUK THE MANNER IN WHICH EXCHANGES OF SOVIET CREW PERSONNEL IN SOVIET PORTS WOULD BE HANDLED. CREW REPLACEMENTS, ZHUK WAS TOLD, WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN INDIVIDUAL TRANSIT VISAS. TO ENSURE THAT THE REPLACEMENTS WOULD BE ABLE TO GO ASHORE ONCE THEY WERE ON THEIR NEW SHIP, SUPPLEMENTARY CREW LIST VISA FOR REPLACEMENTS SHOULD ALSO BE OBTAINED. ZHUK WAS TOLD THAT POSTS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD WERE ALREADY IMPLEMENTING THIS PROCEDURE. ZHUK ASKED ABOUT SITUATIONS WHERE A CREW MEMBER OF A SOVIET VISSLER BECOMES SICK. HE WAS TOLD, THAT, AS IN PAST, EMERGENCY SITUATIONS WOULD RECEIVE EMERGENCY HANDLING. DEPARTMENT POINTED OUT IN THIS CONNECTION THE NUMEROUS MEDEVAC SITUATIONS WHICH US AUTHORITIES HAD HANDLED INVOLVING CREW MEMBERS OF SOVIET MERCHANT FISHING VESSELS. VANCE

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